

Responses to Written Questions Submitted by Honorable Roger F. Wicker to Vice Admiral Karl L. Schultz

*Question 1.* Admiral Schultz, The Coast Guard's counter drug mission is becoming much more complex than even just a few years ago. Transnational criminal organizations are utilizing much more advanced semi-submersible vessels, as well as remotely operated vessels, that are able to enter U.S. waters, as well as our largest ports, undetected.

What disruptive autonomous underwater, surface, or hybrid solar, wind and electric vessels are you exploring to combat this assault (TCO drug trade) on our shores and in our ports?

Response. The FY2018 appropriation included funding to conduct a pilot program studying new technologies, such as autonomous vessels, to improve our maritime domain awareness across our mission sets.

*Question 2.* Does the Coast Guard currently have the resources to test, evaluate and integrate disruptive technologies like autonomous vessels to support the Coast Guard's counter drug mission at the Mona Passage, off the coast of San Diego and the Gulf of Mexico?

Response. Given the vast maritime domain and broad mission sets for which the Coast Guard is responsible, autonomous aviation, surface, and subsurface assets may be part of a comprehensive solution to combatting smuggling activity conducted by Transnational Criminal Organizations. The FY2018 appropriation included funding to conduct a pilot program to study some of these technologies.

*Question 3.* If given adequate resources and funding, would the Coast Guard benefit from adopting these new technologies to combat the flow of illegal narcotics across our maritime borders?

Response. We are currently exploring how new technology can best be applied to improve our performance across all missions.

Responses to Written Questions Submitted by Honorable Dan Sullivan to Vice Admiral Schultz

*Question 1.* : Have Coast Guard vessel deployments increased to the Arctic, or are they scheduled to increase? And if not, why not?

Response. The Coast Guard has increased cutter deployments to the Arctic for the annual Operation Arctic Shield, focused on promoting national interests and sovereignty throughout the Arctic. The increased level of human activity in the Arctic continues to increase the probability of a maritime incident and requires a heightened Coast Guard presence to monitor activity, respond to incidents, enforce regulations and support national interests. The Coast Guard Heavy Polar Icebreaker acquisition program is the first crucial step to providing year-round assured access to the Arctic.

*Question 2.* The closest Coast Guard homeport to the Arctic Circle is over 1,500 miles away from the operating area. The Coast Guard is on record expressing a need for a strategic Arctic port. How beneficial would such a port be for the Coast Guard? And what have your communications been with the Army Corps of Engineers and others in transmitting this demand signal?

Response. A strategic Arctic port would help assure our Nation's ability to maintain U.S. access throughout the Arctic region to more quickly respond to current and future national security demands in the Arctic, to preserve its economic interests, and to exercise U.S. sovereignty. Specifically, a strategic Arctic port capable of accommodating USCG and DoD surface assets would reduce the distance U.S. vessels currently travel for logistical support; it would increase the time these assets can perform missions in the Arctic region; and it could serve as a forward staging base and a hub for missions to advance U.S. national security interests.

For the development of the Coast Guard's February 11, 2014 Report to Congress on the Feasibility of Establishing an Arctic Deep-Draft Seaport, the Coast Guard consulted with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as well as the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Maritime Administration. This report addressed the feasibility of establishing a deepwater seaport in the Arctic to protect and advance strategic United States interests within the Arctic region. Subsequent to that collaboration, Section 1202(c) of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WINN) Act directed the Army Corps to "... consult with the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating to identify benefits in carrying out the missions specified in section 888 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 468) associated with an Arctic deep draft port." The Coast Guard has had numerous exchanges with the USACE regarding this study under the WINN Act, to include the exchange of information related to vessel transits and automatic identification system data.

*Question 3.* For a number of years there has been a military housing shortage in Kodiak. The recently passed Ominbus had funding for Coast Guard housing.

What is the current situation in Kodiak?

Response. Currently, Coast Guard housing in Kodiak maintains full occupancy.

*Question 4.* Where does Alaska writ large stand in line for additional Coast Guard infrastructure funding?

Response. : Infrastructure funding priorities are based on numerous factors to include service location need as well as privately owned options. Future projection shows a possible deficit in Alaska housing. Currently, my staff is exploring ways to decrease this deficit, including a phased approach to address both current and future needs as additional assets are homeported in Alaska.

*Question 5.* In 2016 the Coast Guard finalized a rule that requires the use of biometric readers to verify TWIC (Transportation Worker Identification Credential) cards. It is my understanding that both industry and Coast Guard have acknowledged this difference and Coast Guard has indicated to industry and the regulated community that there would be a delay. The compliance deadline of August 23, 2018 is fast approaching. And these facilities, having relied on assurances from Coast Guard itself, will not be able to comply.

Did the rule that was finalized in 2016 differ from the proposal put forth in 2013?

Response. The language in the Final Rule was slightly different than what was in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and that difference created some uncertainty in the applicability of the rule.

*Question 6.* What is the status of the rule implementation? Will there be a delay? And will industry be consulted before a new compliance date is made?

Response. In consultation with DHS, the Coast Guard diligently considered a host of options regarding the TWIC Reader Rule. We evaluated all options and ultimately initiated a rulemaking project to provide clarity to the affected population. The Office of Management and Budget is currently reviewing the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Once published in the Federal Register, the public will have the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

*Question 7.* Is there a training shortfall within the Coast Guard to provide Coast Guardsmen the needed authorities to conduct maritime interdiction operations?

Response. There are no known training shortfalls that would limit our authorities to conduct maritime interdictions.

*Question 8.* What are the Coast Guard's approval authorities for escalation of force?

Response. Collectively, 14 U.S.C. § 89(a), 14 U.S.C. § 637, and 14 U.S.C. § 2237 provide a triad of authority, indemnification, and criminal offense designed to support USCG efforts to stop non-compliant vessel when conducting interdiction.

*Question 9.* Does the Coast Guard have a training, rank, and/or experience level problem that would prevent vessel commanders from making escalation of force decisions on the spot (not including self-defense)? How can this be addressed?

Response. No. The Coast Guard does execute many bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements that sometimes require legal review and senior level approval to ensure interdictions are conducted according to those agreements when operating on the high seas.

Response to Written Questions Submitted by Honorable Jim Inhofe to Vice Admiral Karl L. Schultz

*Question 1.* As Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I know that our military was gutted under President Obama. Under sequestration, Defense accounted for 50 percent of the cuts, but only 16 percent of spending. As a result, our military equipment is aging and our base infrastructure requires critical maintenance and upgrades. We have seen impacts on personnel, pilots are leaving the military because they are not getting flight hours to maintain their skills. Today, we are fixing these problems – in large part because our Senior Military leaders have finally acknowledged there is a problem. We finally have an Administration that will support the necessary funding to rebuild our military – and Congress went above and beyond the President’s request in the funding bill to give our men and women in uniform the resources required to answer the call quickly and effectively. Now, because the Military will always make it work, it took a long time before we saw the impact to readiness that I just described. As you well know, the Coast Guard has a unique responsibility for both Homeland Security and non-Homeland Security—in fact it has 11 statutory missions.

How would you characterize the state of readiness for the United States Coast Guard today?

Response. The Coast Guard appreciates Congress’s support to rebuild the readiness of our Service. The CG, like the other Armed Forces, has faced significant challenges under the Budget Control Act caps and faces challenges associated with degraded readiness. Unfortunately, persistent underfunding has eroded readiness and forced the CG to prioritize the most critical near-term operations and direct support activities at the expense of modernizing, advancing capabilities, and building capacity to keep pace with the proliferating threats we face as a Nation. Specifically, we face:

Aging assets with significantly increasing maintenance costs;  
Lost purchasing power due to the lack of non-pay inflation;  
Deferred maintenance across all asset portfolios and shore infrastructure;  
Strained and undersized workforce;  
Emerging requirements (e.g., cyber-security, marine safety capacity).

*Question 2.* When your predecessor testified before this Committee, I asked him about the condition of the Coast Guard’s Inland River Tenders. These vessels maintaining navigation aids and buoys marking water channels. These channels must be marked for river barges to safely move grain, fertilizer, steel, and refined petroleum along 600 miles of river from the Port of Catoosa in Tulsa to New Orleans and beyond. These vessels are old, the Coast Guard vessel responsible for navigation aids in the Arkansas River was built in 1965. Coast Guard Reauthorization Act that passed this Committee included my provision asking the Coast Guard for a report on an acquisition strategy for new river tenders.

Can you discuss the current acquisition plan and whether there's any opportunity to accelerate the acquisition of these sorely needed replacement ships?

Response. We are incredibly thankful to Congress for the additional funding in FY18 to accelerate the recapitalization of our inland fleet. The program entered the “Analyze/Select” phase (ADE-1) in December 2017 and is planning to engage with industry and other stakeholders to find efficiencies that can further accelerate the program. Based on the additional funding provided in FY18, we are working to accelerate via the following initiatives:

Accelerating design studies and leveraging existing work with external agencies (i.e., Army Corps, etc.),  
Advancing the completion of critical acquisition milestones and Alternative Analysis studies,  
Hiring necessary personnel to work toward an accelerated acquisition timeline, and  
Engaging with industry to leverage their collective knowledge and support.

*Question 3.* Are you working with other agencies, like the Army Corps of Engineers, to determine if you can incorporate existing vessel designs to make recapitalization less expensive and time-consuming?

Response. Yes. The Coast Guard is working with the Army Corps of Engineers and industry to develop “indicative” designs that will meet the government’s operational requirements. These designs will leverage existing state of the market technology that will provide an affordable and highly capable material solution to meet the nation’s needs within the Marine Transportation System.

Response to Written Questions Submitted by Honorable Todd Young to Vice Admiral Karl L. Schultz

*Question 1.* Vice Admiral, on February 15, 2018, Admiral Tidd, Commander, United States Southern Command, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee. During the course of the hearing, Ranking Member Reed asked Admiral Tidd to confirm what percentage of shipments thought to be containing illicit material were able to be interdicted using currently available resources. Admiral Tidd testified that they were only able to interdict about 25 percent of the vessels transporting illicit materials.

First, do you agree with Admiral Tidd's assessment?

Response. Yes. The Coast Guard has significantly increased our cutter presence in the transit zone since 2014, however, in that same time, the TCO shipment of illicit material, specifically cocaine, has increased dramatically.

While we have available intelligence that allows us to know when many of these movements take place, we do not have the number of assets available to achieve the interdiction rates directed by national policy.

*Question 2.* Second, what role does the Coast Guard specifically play in the interdiction of these shipments?

Response. We are the primary agency responsible for interdicting vessels on the high seas. We are uniquely equipped with Airborne Use of Force Packages onboard cutters deploying to the Eastern Pacific where the majority of cocaine is shipped via go fast and low-profile vessels. Our National Security Cutters (NSCs) are also equipped with organic intelligence collection capability which further facilitates our efforts to combat TCOs.

*Question 3.* Third, what specific assets does the Coast Guard need to interdict more illicit shipments? (For each additional asset, please describe how this additional asset would specifically change the percentage of illicit shipments we could interdict.)

Response. The Coast Guard's aging Medium Endurance Cutters are an average of 35 years old, but conduct 40% of the interdiction in the offshore areas. I am committed to the continuing the recapitalization of the ships with the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC), in order to make sure we are able to continue targeting TCOs where they are most vulnerable—at sea—in the years to come. The FY18 appropriation includes funding for construction of the 1st OPC and long lead time material for the 2nd OPC.